

# COMPLEMENT INSUBORDINATION IN GERMANIC



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# INTRODUCTION

## **Insubordination**

= “the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses”  
(Evans 2007: 367)

**(1) If you could open the window?** (English, IC)

**(2) That it should have come to this!**  
(English, Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 944)

## **This presentation**

Focus on one type of insubordination, i.e. complement insubordination, in five related languages, i.e. Dutch, German, English, Swedish and Danish

# INTRODUCTION (2)

## Research questions / structure of the presentation

- Overview of independent complement clauses in the Germanic languages:
  - Three basic semantic categories (semantic parameters based on Verstraete, D'Hertefelt & Van linden 2012)
    - Deontic
    - Evaluative
    - Elaborative
  - Constructional characteristics
  - All instances of insubordination?
- Cross-linguistic differences
- Conclusions

# INTRODUCTION (3)

## Independent complement constructions

- Introduced by Dutch *dat*, German *dass*, English *that*, Swedish *att*, Danish *at*
- In most languages also word-order difference (vis-à-vis main clause):
  - Dutch and German: verb-final (instead of V2)
  - Swedish and Danish: sentence adverb before finite verb (instead of after verb)

## Three categories

- Deontic ('uncontrolled' / 'controlled')
- Evaluative ('unexpected' / 'expected and negative')
- Elaborative

## Data

- Spoken language corpora (see references) and Internet corpus (IC)

## DEONTIC INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS: UNCONTROLLED ('OPTATIVE')

### Meaning

Desirability of a potential state of affairs (SoA), speaker has no control over its realization

### Long-range wishes:

- (3) My greatest regret, is that I die now, and never again shall I see Eowyn, my fair daughter of Rohan. Oh, **that I could see her smile, one last time, my beloved.** (English, IC)

### Short-range wishes:

- (4) **Dat        het        maar rap        vrijdag        is!**  
COMPL    it        PART    soon   Friday        is.PRES  
(Dutch, IC)

*I hope Friday will come soon!*

# DEONTIC INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS: UNCONTROLLED ('OPTATIVE') (2)

## Cross-linguistic overview

Meaning	Dutch	German	English	Danish	Swedish
Long-range	+ (modals)	+ ( <i>auf dass</i> , subjunctive)	archaic	obsolete	obsolete
Short-range	+ ( <i>maar</i> )	+ ( <i>nur, bloss</i> )	-	-	-

## DEONTIC INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS: CONTROLLED

## Meaning

Desirability of a potential SoA, speaker (potentially) has control over its realization

(5) Das [sic] du dich ja warm hältst!  
 COMPL you REFL PART warm hold.PRES  
 (German, IC)

*You should keep yourself warm!*

(6)	Dat	hij	misschien eens	een	Linux-CD	koopt.
	COMPL	he	maybe	PART	a	Linux-cd
						buy.PRES
						(Dutch, IC)

*He should maybe buy a Linux-cd.*

# DEONTIC INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS: CONTROLLED (2)

## Cross-linguistic overview

Meaning	Dutch	German	English	Danish	Swedish
Strong	<p>+</p> <p>(Prohibition)</p> <p>Formal marking e.g. double complementation, <i>maar</i></p>	<p>+</p> <p>(Prohibition and direct order)</p> <p>Formal marking: <i>mir, nur, ja</i></p>	-	-	-
Weak	+	-	-	-	-



## EVALUATIVE INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS:

### ‘UNEXPECTED’ EVALUATION

#### Meaning

Speaker evaluates SoA as unexpected, and evaluation can be either positive or negative

#### (7) That it should have come to this!

(English, Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 944)

(8)	At	noget	så	katastrofalt	kan
	COMPL	something	so	catastrophic	can.PRES
	ende	så	godt..		(Danish, IC)
	end.INF	so	well		

*[I can't believe] that something so catastrophic can end so well!*

## EVALUATIVE INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS:

## Meaning

## Speaker evaluates SoA as expected and negative

- (9) **Dass du auch immer so direkt sein musst.** (German, IC)  
COMPL you also always so direct  
be.INF must.PRES  
*Why do you always have to be so direct?*
- (10) **Att han aldrig kan fatta!**  
COMPL he never can.PRES understand.INF  
(Swedish, Petersson 2009: 107)  
*Why can't he ever understand!*

# EVALUATIVE INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS

## Cross-linguistic overview

Meaning	Formal marking	Dutch	German	English	Danish	Swedish
Unexpected	Scalar / focus marking	+	+	+ (with <i>should</i> )	+ (preceding <i>tænk</i> frequent)	+
Expected	Necessity / inability marking	+	+	-	+ (preceding <i>tænk</i> obligatory)	+

## ELABORATIVE INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS

### Meaning

Speaker expands on something that s/he or the addressee have said before

(11) - Hebt ge zelf al eens zo'n scan gehad?

- Nee.

- **Dat**     **ge**     **in**     **zo'n**     **machine**     **gaat.**

COMPL     you     in     such.a     machine     go.PRES

(Dutch, CGN)

- *Have you ever had a scan yourself?*

- *No.*

- *When you go inside some sort of machine.*

## ELABORATIVE INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS (2)

- ‘Elaborative’ < Halliday (1994: 225): **elaboration**  
“does not introduce a new element into the picture but rather provides a further characterization of one that is already there, restating it, clarifying it, refining it, or adding a descriptive attribute or comment.”
- Always strong **pragmatic dependency** on previous discourse (cf. Lindström & Londen 2008: 128)
  - To what extent can these be considered ‘main clauses’ in their own right?
  - No instances of insubordination (↔ Evans 2007)

## ELABORATIVE INDEPENDENT COMPLEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS (3)

### Cross-linguistic overview

Meaning	Formal marking	Dutch	German	English	Danish	Swedish
Elaborative	Descriptive / demonstrative particles	+	+	+	+	+

## CONCLUSIONS

Meaning		Formal marking	Dutch	German	English	Swedish	Danish
Deontic	Uncontrolled	Modals of potentiality; particles	+	+	archaic	obsolete	obsolete
	Controlled	Particles	+	+	-	-	-
Evaluative	Unexpected	Scalar elements (explicit or implicit)	+	+	archaic	+	+
	Expected and negative	Combinations of adverbs 'always, never' and modal verbs 'must', 'can'	+	+	-	+	+ (with <i>tænk</i> )
Elaborations		Descriptive / demonstrative particles like <i>so</i> , <i>like this</i>	+	+	+	+	+

## CONCLUSIONS (2)

### Differences in functional range:

- Broadest range attested in Dutch and German
- More restricted range in Swedish and German
  - Further factor of interest: in Danish apparently higher need for semi-embedding element in some contexts (cf. *tænk* in evaluatives)
- Most restricted range in English

### Possible factors in divergence:

- Diachronic developments (some meanings can be lost over time, cf. obsolete optatives in Swedish and Danish, 'archaic' optatives and evaluatives in English)
- Different degrees of 'integration' of subordinate clause in main clause complex (cf. König & van der Auwera 1988)

BUT in general: more research needed!



## CONCLUSIONS (3)

### **Complement insubordination in Germanic from a typological perspective:**

Semantics of our three categories: clearly interpersonal (cf. Evans 2007)

- Attitudes of the speaker (evaluative, uncontrolled deontic)
- Speaker-addressee negotiation (controlled deontic)
- Organization of information in interaction (elaborative)

BUT: importance of the parameter of pragmatic independence to delineate concept of insubordination!

## CONCLUSIONS (4)

### **Schematic generalization: unity within complement insubordination?**

- At first sight: one 'schema' for all constructions, with different categories distinguished on the basis of formal parameters (e.g. 'unexpected' evaluatives with scalar markers)
  - BUT: several problems with this approach (cf. Verstraete, D'Hertefelt & Van linden 2012): different main clause origins, different degrees of conventionalization and independence...
- No schematic generalization possible

### **Further research:**

- Insubordination = still largely underdescribed
- Extend study to other (Germanic) languages, to come to a better understanding of this phenomenon and help define its boundaries

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

# ABBREVIATIONS

○ COMPL	complementizer
○ INF	infinitive
○ NEG	negation
○ PART	particle
○ PL	plural
○ PRES	present
○ REFL	reflexive

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